Posted on:
14 February 2023

Marriage can be tough at the best of times.

But when one partner has a disability and the other is their full-time carer, the pressure can sometimes be too much.

Gill Godfrey partly credits the survival of her 42-year marriage to the support she receives from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

‘I think it helped us stay together because he had a lot of work to do with me, and he worried a lot,’ Gill says.

NDIS-funded support workers help Gill 5 days a week, with 2 days reserved for family only.

‘The first time I went out with an NDIS support worker was the first time I left home without my husband Alan since I was married. It changed my life.

‘Now I’m out in the community all the time. I can go shopping, go to movies, have lunch with friends, and I’m one of those nanas that watch their grandkids playing sport every weekend,’ Gill says.

Prior to the NDIS the only support she could access was 2 hours of house cleaning services each fortnight.

Back then, Gill was stranded at home most of the time.

‘I was never able to go anywhere,’ Gill says.

The closest wheelchair accessible taxi in Gill’s area had to come from 40 kilometres away.

‘When Alan took me out, he would have to pull the old wheelchair apart, put it in the boot, then pull it all out and put it back together again. It was hard work,’ Gill says.

Gill was born with spinal muscular atrophy, affecting her mobility, strength, and coordination.

The condition deteriorates over time.

She cannot stand anymore. Sitting and swallowing are difficult.

‘I'm at the stage now that I can lift a cup of coffee, but that's about it,’ Gills says.

Gill is resilient, positive, and grateful.

‘I'm actually doing really well for my age. I think that is because of my positive attitude and the supports I have,’ Gill says.

Gill’s spine is crooked so she can’t lay flat. Her NDIS plan funds an adjustable bed. It also funds a motorised wheelchair, a hoist to help carers move her, and important accessible modifications to the family’s van and bathroom.

Along the way Gill has also needed physiotherapy and occupational therapy.

Like 29% of NDIS participants, Gill self manages her funding. This gives her the flexibility to decide what supports she buys to help her live her best life.

‘I can hire the support workers I want. They do not have to be registered providers. That can save a lot of money,’ she says.

Having lived her whole life with disability, the grandmother of 7 has seen a lot of progress in disability support.

‘I was brought up in what was called a ‘home for crippled children’ at the time. I was one of the older children and I had to look after the younger ones a bit,’ she says.

For 20 years, Gill moved around Australia with Alan for his work.

‘It was a job he loved and I loved it too. I got to meet some really lovely people.

‘It was a challenge finding houses that were wheelchair accessible, but my husband is pretty good at making ramps and things like that,’ Gill says.

Alan had to give up work to care for her seven years ago, just before the NDIS rolled out in Queensland.

‘It was hard to get anything through the old system. You had to fund your own wheelchairs and things like that.

‘Now I have more freedom and independence, and I can't praise the NDIS enough,’ Gill says.

## Related Stories and videos

Self-managing participant Gill Godfrey enjoys the freedom and choice to choose her own supports

### Gill manages her own care and helps others to do the same

10 August 2023

Gill is a grandmother of 7 who lives with spinal muscular atrophy. She has been an NDIS participant for almost 7 years and enjoys the greater control that comes with self-management.

## Self-manager Gill is using the tools and resources available to help her get the most out of her NDIS plan

14 January 2025
International Day of People with Disability 2023 – We’re better together

## Marie finds new life purpose with improved mobility and independence

23 November 2023
More stories and videos